



COUNCIL - 22ND APRIL 2014

SUBJECT: TIMING OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To review and determine the start time of scrutiny committee meetings in light of the introduction of committee pre-meetings.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report outlines the background for the need to review the start time of scrutiny committee meetings and the issues associated with changing the established start time for committees.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The report assists in the implementation of the Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan approved by full Council on 8th October 2013.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 Full Council approved the Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan on 8th October 2013. The Action Plan contained a recommendation that scrutiny committees hold a Members pre-meeting prior to a scrutiny committee to prioritise reports for discussion, identify areas of best practice or concern and agree questioning strategies for each report etc. Since October 2013 a number of training sessions have been held for Members on 'Effective Pre-Meetings and to date 75% of Scrutiny Members have attended and 100% have rated the training good or very good.
- 4.2 Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee has begun trialling members' pre-meetings with a half an hour pre-meeting prior to its last meeting. The trial was discussed at the last meeting of the Scrutiny Leadership Group when Members raised concerns about the timing of pre-meetings. In particular, concerns were raised that some members, for example, those in employment, would not be able to participate in pre-meetings that began prior to 5.00 pm. The Scrutiny Leadership discussed the following 4 Options for the timing of Members pre-meetings:
- 4.3 **Option 1** – Hold a pre-meeting the day before a scrutiny committee meeting. It was suggested that this would give scrutiny committee Members more time to consider the reports and agree lines of questions. However, concerns were expressed that this would effectively double the amount of scrutiny meetings and it would be difficult to accommodate these into an already busy schedule of meetings.

- 4.4 **Option 2** – Hold the pre-meeting on the same day as the scrutiny committee from 4.00 pm until 5.00 pm. Members agreed this would give the advantage of giving more time to consider reports, however, the earlier timing could exclude those Members with work commitments.
- 4.5 **Option 3** – Hold the pre-meeting on the same day as the scrutiny committee from 4.30 pm until 5.00 pm. Again, Members agreed this would be too early for those Members with work commitments.
- 4.6 **Option 4** – Hold the pre-meeting on the same day as the scrutiny committee from 5.00 pm until 5.30 pm. This would have the effect of changing the timing of scrutiny committee to 5.30 pm. Members agreed this was their preferred option because it did not disadvantage Members with work commitments.
- 4.7 There are practical considerations in changing the start time of scrutiny committee meetings. Putting back the start time will have an impact on officers attending meetings to present reports as meetings will finish later into the evening. The Facilities Management staff will also be required to staff the entrance to Penallta House for an additional half and hour as the reception desk closes at 5.00 pm. Likewise, representatives from other organisations invited to make presentation or give evidence will also be expected to attend later into the evening. The Welsh Government is shortly expected to publish guidance prescribing certain public service providers as organisations that the Council will have a duty to scrutinise. Members should be mindful that the timing of meetings involving other organisations should be held at mutually agreeable times.
- 4.8 Any change in the start time of scrutiny committee should be applied consistently across each of the Council's 5 scrutiny committees to ensure that Members, officers, the public and press are clear about the timing of scrutiny committee meetings.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 No full impact assessment has been undertaken on this report, however the options presented recognise the different impacts on Members, officers and other organisations, whilst trying to balance these against the need for Members to have time to fully consider reports and agree on any questions that need to be asked during a scrutiny committee meeting.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising a result of this report.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Personnel implications are outlined in paragraph 4.7 above.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 There are no consultation responses not reflected in this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That Members determine the start time of scrutiny committees in order to facilitate the introduction of Members pre-meetings.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To implement the Council's Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 The Local Government Act 2000

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